Information Impact

Librarians as Change Agents for Sustainable Library and Information Service Delivery in a Digital Society

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Abstract

This paper investigates the role of Librarians as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in adigital society. The purpose of the study were: to ascertain the types of Library and information service delivery; to investigate Librarians' role as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery; to find out the challenges librarians face as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery; and to proffer solution to enhance librarians' role as change agents towards the sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society.The study adopts a conceptual review based on previous research. It was recommended that Librarians as change agents should re-examine and reconfigure their job roles in library and information service delivery for relevance in their field, there is a need to meet up with their multi-dimensional job roles to sustain library and information service delivery in a digital society. More so, adequate funding, training and retraining, tooling, and retooling to avoid phobia for loss of job/ insecurityshould be provided for librarians/libraries to keep up with effective service delivery. The study concludes that sustainable library and information service deliveryin libraries generally and for librarians in particular will enhance their multi-dimensional job roles today and tomorrow to know what has changed in a digital society.

Keywords

Change agents, librarians, digital society, service delivery, Nigeria

Introduction

A change agent is anyone who has the skill and power to stimulate, facilitate, and coordinate the change effort. It can be said that librarians are change agents with the skills and power to stimulate, facilitate and coordinate library and information service delivery in a digital society. The concept of library and information service delivery is changing especially at this time of new trends and technology in Librarianship. These have led modern-day librarians to become information managers, information providers, consultants, curriculum and instructional designers, leaders, production specialists, and teachers with multi-dimensional job roles to sustain library and information service delivery in a digital society. The libraries aim to provide services that satisfy their users' needs and wants, and the incorporation of ICT into library and information services has provided libraries with a great opportunity to sustain their service delivery. The library today is a technologically driven one that uses the principles of traditional library service to organize knowledge and communicate the same to clients in the global community essentially by electronic means. Libraries are service organizations where individuals, organizations, and societies are provided unhindered access to substantial information. Idiodi and Emezaivwakpor (2022) assert that Library services across the world have continued to metamorphose from their traditional analog method due to the introduction of different ICT facilities to a more advanced way of achieving its goals and objectives. Libraries are the representatives of social society and aim to serve society with emerging technological tools.

Digital society is driven by ICT, along with new skills for the population, grants, and sustainability. Eksili (2022) opines that Digital technology is a society in which technology is an invariable part of human life. Ways of doing business and habits in this society is based on digital technology. The latest name in Digital Society includes the Internet of Things (IoT), 5G, Cloud Computing, Big Data, Human-Computer Interaction, and many more.More so, the digital society which is driven by emerging technologies, brought a lot of changes not only in the library and information services delivery but also on the roles and expectations of the librarians to satisfy their user's information needs and demands.

The new trends of rapidly evolving technologies drivemany of the changes in librarianship as a profession. The discipline is becoming very involved in the management of electronic resources for libraries and their service delivery.The issue is that there are known cases where librarians are not aware of their roles and are not skilled in carrying out these tasksin an environment that may be impacted by these innovative changes. This paper, therefore, discusses the role of librarians as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society.

Library/librarians

The library as a gateway to information is a place where information is acquired, processed, repackaged, preserved, and disseminated. Its' key role is to collect, organize, and disseminate information as well as provide access to a wide range/variety of information sources. The rapid growth in the volume of available information and the continuing/emerging technological changes have radically affected the manner and way in which information is accessed. Hence, information is apt for the development of individuals and society at large. Information technology has given power to users of information to have access to and use it considerably.Though, the growth or proliferation of information is not readily available to the majority of users due to the gap between the information-rich and information-poor, moreover, the gap continues to widen greatly.

The vital role of librarians is to bridge the gap as change agents by being effective in the collection, organization, and dissemination of information to meet the demands and needs of library and information service users.Librarians becoming aware that the abundance of information has helped not only in quantity but also the quality of information and in training other librarians and users of information to use this information effectively while also upholding the importance to access to information and freedom of expression.

Libraries throughout the world have the mandate to provide citizens with access to networked information, to alleviate poverty and deprivation due to the paradoxical situation of scarcity in an era of information overflow. This has affected librarians and their service delivery significantly and they have to act as change agents to sustain library and information service delivery in a digital world.In the modern world, information has the power to transform the lives of people and nations. Access to information which is crucial is one of the core needs of society and the librarians/libraries are fulfilling the need through capacity building, partnerships (collaboration), training, and access opportunities for everyone. Everyone use information, be it as citizens, workers, problem solvers, or as lifelong learners.

According to Zhang (2022), lifelong and sustainable learning mindsets can effectively adapt to rapidly changing technologies and new digital skills. Traditionally, the library school has provided the setting where individuals "learn how to learn, unlearn and relearn". Major learning competencies include formulating questions, accessing potential sources of information, evaluating the information for accuracy and pertinence, organizing the information, and finally applying the information to answer the original questions - the last and most valuable step in the process. It is not just finding the information; but the use of it that motivates the learner. With the help of so many resources available to build up library skills, librarians with their multi-dimensional jobs are in a great position to

prepare them for the inevitable change that will continue to set them up for better support in the digital society.

Change Agent

To change something is to make its form, nature, or content different from what it is currently or from what it would be if left alone.Change means to make a shift, to alter, remodel, revamp. A change agent is that individual, person, or group that undertakes the task of initiating and managing change in any organization, region, or state (the organization could be likened to a library organization). These change agents can help to transform the socio-economic development of the country, inspiring and influencing others and so on. A change agent is a facilitator of change in the perception of the situation, whose main task is to help the representatives of the target group to identify and solve their problems by attracting the necessary resources for solutions. Change agents are individuals or types of agencies that influence the decisions of units of adoptions in a desirable direction, at least from their perspective (Jermolajeval et al., 2022). It can categorically be said that librarians arethe positive agent for change in the library or any organization in which they have the skills and power to stimulate, facilitate and coordinate the change efforts in a digital society.

Digital Society

A society is a group of people who have regular interactions with one another, or a large social group that shares the same spatial or social territory and is typically subject to the same political authority and dominant cultural expectations. A "digital society" is an interdisciplinary research area as well as a type of progressive society formed as a result of the adaptation and integration of advanced technologies into society and culture. According to Choudhury, Roy Chowdhury, Singh, and Singh (2022), the digital society is bound to change rationally. COVID-19 increased the way we connect through technology and brought more of our lives online. For many, this meant new opportunities for increased career flexibility and productivity.Nonetheless, the shift has also increased the digital divide (Banks, 2022). Accordingly, while the business world is changing in the newchanging work environments (new normal) in a technology-driven society, Librarians and libraries of all types are experiencingradical changes due to new emerging technologies. In today's changing world, Libraries/librarians play a fundamental role to be relevant to maintain effective service delivery.Among the emerging technologies and field that is responsible for developing a true Digital Society include Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Information Science and Computing, and other areas viz. Business Studies, Commerce, and several areas of Humanities and Social Science. Digital society is characterized by information flowing through global networks at unprecedented speeds. The growing array of devices comprising the 'Internet of Things' and 'smart cities', link mundane objects in our environments to

networks of data analysis and in the process make our everyday lives ever more 'super-connected' (Redshaw, 2020). Qurbonovich (2022) asserts that the emergence of the term "digital society" is associated with the development of digital technologies that have been successfully adopted by public practice which is making our lives change for the better as our distance is getting closer. Therefore, we must use these technologies for the right purpose.

Digital society plays a substantial role in influencing opinions about how people live and work. This, in turn, influences daily and once-in-a-lifetime decisions made by individuals, populations, organizations, governments, and others. The digital society mainly depends on different kinds of stakeholders, which include society, technologies, and content (Paul & Aithal, 2018). According to Farrell, Yuan, and Roy (2022), Internet of Things (IoT) devices have greatly contributed to Big Data, a phrase that has gained popularity as existing and new data generators are employed in our environments. This could be the library environment and its surroundings in a digital society. Examples of digital society include cyber-security and digital conflicts; digital sovereignty; e-citizenship, e-democracy, and e-governance; e-commerce; e-health and digital well-being; the environmental impact of digital technologies; ethnographic and anthropological studies of digital cultures; etcetera. We live in a digital society where the development of digital information resources and service delivery comes with a rapid growth in information flow. Accordingly, Levin & Mamlok (2021) argue that, in light of the abundance of truly amazing and sometimes magical phenomena of digital technology, it is challenging to identify the prime trends that characterize the essence of the technological culture of digital society.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is as follows;

1. To ascertain types of Library andInformation Service Delivery in a digital society.
2. To investigateLibrarian's role as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society.
3. To find out the challenges facing librarians'role as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society.
4. To proffer solutions towards theenhancement of the role of librarians as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society.

Methodology

The study adopts a conceptual review based on previous research, using a variety of databases to draw the conclusion that the role librarians play as change agents must be that which will keep them abreast of the technological advances for sustainable library and information service delivery for the development of society.A wide

range of sources were consulted to ensure balance in the reviews. Peer-reviewed national and international journals included.

Types of Library and Information Service Delivery in a digital society

Library and information services can be delivered by librarians and information professionals through new emerging media platforms via mobile technologies such as smartphones, tablets, computers, and so on. Kasa (2011), Abdullahi, Adamu Gora, & Mohammed (2018) posited that new media technologies can only be applied in university libraries when the librarians in strategic positions are tech-savvy and can explore the digital environment for effective and efficient library and information services.

Table 1: Types of Library and information services generally include the following as shown

S/No.	Types of Library and Information Services
1.	Referral services (RS),
2.	Current Awareness Services (CAS)
3.	Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)
4.	Internet Services (IS)
5.	Document Delivery Services,
6.	Inter-Library Loan Services (ILLS)
7.	Reference Services (RS)
8	Bibliographic services,
9.	Webliographic services
10.	Circulation Services (CS)

Figure 1: *Types of Library and Information service delivery in a digital society*

Library and information service delivery has undergone a fresh revolution due to the impact of ICT and library resource digitization. On the one hand, the globalization of human existence and the development of ICT and its applications have led to an unbelievable boom in the availability of information in a variety of formats, with each aspect becoming more personal, global, and available. As a result, many of the present digital environments have changed not only how libraries and information services are provided but also how library professionals should perform to meet their patrons' data needs for effective service delivery.

Accordingly, Saka & Okee (2021) investigated the use of innovative and emerging technologies for sustainable library and information service delivery. They affirmed that information services include circulation, Current Awareness Services, Selective Dissemination of Information, outreach/extension, information services, and Bibliographic and referral services that are in conjunction with innovative and new technological devices and gadgets.

Librarians' Role as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society

Librarians' innovative and creative role in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) and varieties of operators in acquiring, classifying, cataloguing, shelving, or digitizing information resources improves service delivery in both physical and virtual environments. Librarians require key ICT skills to be able to deliver digital services in the promotion of blended learning; such skills include communication skills, networking skills, internet search skills, database skills, and basic computer skills (Horsfall, Omehia, & Nsirim, 2021). Librarians, as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society, have the capability and technical know-how to drastically transform libraries due to their multi-faceted jobs. They have changed from local reach of resources to global reach of resources through networks because of the trends and technologies in a changing work environment.

In a technologically advancing society, librarians are expected to improve libr ary and information service delivery through access and use of digital devices which is becoming increasingly important in today's technologically driven and dependent society. ICTcan be used as a key enabler to engage librarians and assist them in fitting into their multidimensional job tasks. Librarians use digital skills in today's digital society hence, they become technocrats. A technocrat is an advocate of technology and/or technocracy or an individual who makes decisions based solely on technical information and not personal or public opinion. Technocracy is a societal structure or system of governance where decision-makers are selected based on technological knowledge. Techno-stress and techno-phobia, competing with search engines, lack of standardization, and quality service delivery area few factors that influence the role of Librarians in a technology-driven environment.Therefore, as change Agents, librarians should have no fear of technology. In the present digital environment, advancements in ICT, options of sources, the format of information, and a way to information flow havea great impact on the role of librarians. Librarians are becoming agents of accessibility and integration, linking users to a range of digital information available through licensing agreements or other means (Manoj Kumar Verma, 2015).

Olayemi, Abolarinwa and Olayemi, (2022) carried out a study on the Perception of public library users on the library and librarians as change agents in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a Descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised Lagos State Public Library users in three (3) selected Divisional libraries stratified to represent the three Senatorial Districts of the State. A sample size of 381 was drawn using the Research Advisor table for selecting the sample. Structured and validated questionnaires with a reliability coefficientof 0.70 combined with oral interviews were used to collect data. A simple random sampling

technique was adopted in selecting the respondents. The findings of the study revealed the followings; that librarianship as a profession was rated lowest in terms of occupational status as compared to other listed professions; that the public considerably underestimated the level of training required to be a librarian. However, the findings showed that the public acknowledged the perceived roles of libraries and librarians as change agents which debunked the fallacy that the Internet has replaced libraries/ librarians. Based on the findings, it was recommended that there is a need to canvass adequate and regular funding for the acquisition of information resources and the provision of quality library services to change the negative perceptions about libraries and librarians. The study concluded that a fundamental shift is required from practitioners and related professional bodies to raise the image of the profession as well as raise awareness about the skills and competencies to promote the library and information profession to flourish as change agents

Accordingly, Horsfall, Omehia and Nsirim, (2021), asserts that librarians are expected to carve a niche for themselves in the digital space by acquiring the requisite skills needed to respond to innovations and providing any kind of digital services, and they should not just acquire the skills, they have to offer the services. Librarians with their Many Hats and Many Skills have advanced greatly to become subject experts, Legal advisers, leaders, mentors, creators and disseminators of knowledge, and so on. The librarianship profession in this era of emerging trends and technology, assists users of information to have literacy skills so they become knowledgeable and passionate about lifelong learning. Nevertheless, the multi-dimensional job roles of librarians in the digital society can be summarized as seen in the figure;

Leader

Subject Expert

Communicator

Time Manager

Tech-savvy

Mentor

**multi-dimensional
job roles of
librarians in the
digital society**

Creators

Resource manager

Navigational
guide

Preservator

Legal advicer
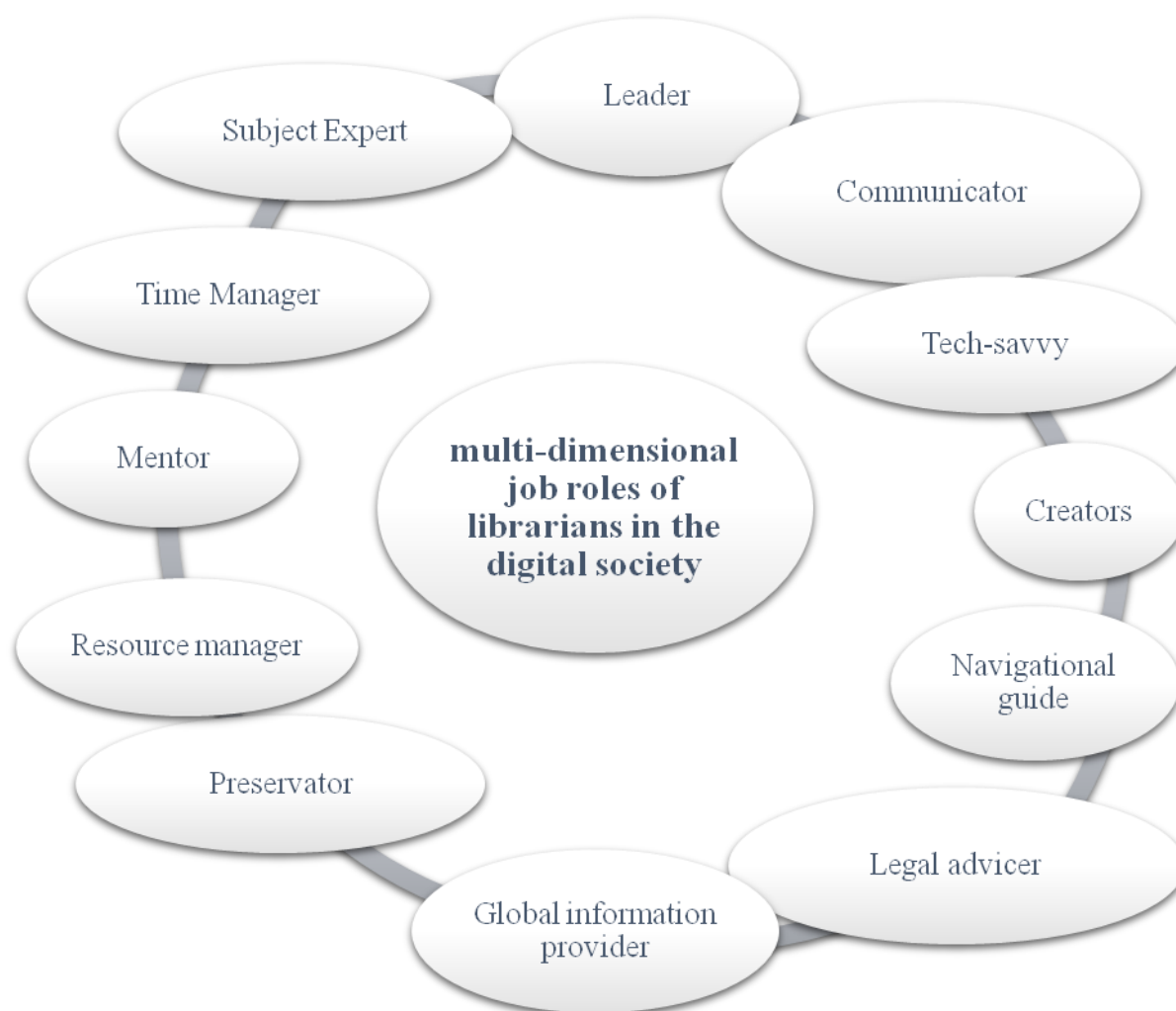
Global information
provider

Figure 2: *Multi-dimensional job roles of librarians*

Librarians, as change agents, market themselves and library services through the application of ICT to reach out to their clientele to satisfy their users' information needs and demands in a changing work environment. There were some challenges, such as ignorance among librarians, a lack of ICT infrastructure, a lack of awareness of the public's right to information, a lack of funding, and a lack of training and retraining of library staff. However, some strategies, implications, and recommendations were proffered. It was concluded that effective marketing be used to promote access to library and information services as a panacea towards sustainable Nigerian libraries in the digital age (Horsfall, 2020).

The challenges librarians face as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society
The under-listed problems are some ofthe main challenges facing the role of Librarians as change agents in delivering effective services in a digital society.

i. **Lack of networked facilities:** equipment failures or damages can be one of the root causes of network failure**.** One of the most common challenges of network failure, aside from human error, is a spike in traffic that can happen at any time. This network failure can disrupt library service delivery across the library and its environment. Other common network failures include physical connectivity issues, a weak Wi-Fi signal, and a slow network.

ii. **Lack of staff development:** the consequences of a lack of training at a workplace can cause a lack of progress in developing their staff. The lack could be due to a lack of training facilities and resources.

iii. **Inadequate funding:** Inadequate finance is one of the biggest obstacles facing librarians as change agents in the provision of library and information services to support effective service delivery in the digital society. Information specialists who work in libraries are deeply concerned about it.

iv. **Insufficient power supply:** this can cause occasional hiccups as a result of the system being underpowered if the heat sinking is inadequate to supply power to the system. Overheating of the power supply can occur due to fan failure. Therefore, an insufficient power supply can cause system failure problems.

v. **Another issue with the digital society's oversaturation is information obesity (Infobesity) (oversaturation).**

vi. **Job insecurity**: In this technology-driven era, some librarians view the adoption of new technology as fraught with risk and uncertainty since they believe it may have several unanticipated and unexpected implications.

Strategies to enhance the role of librarians as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society

The following strategies can help librarians play a bigger role as change agents for transformational leaders in achieving sustainable library and information service delivery in a digital society. These will benefit today's and tomorrow's multidimensional job roles of librarians by helping them to understand what has changed.

i. **Networked facilities:** there is a need for effective and efficient networking facilities to overcome the challenges it poses in the delivery of library and information services.

ii. **Staff development:** This is required tohandle new difficulties by using innovative methods such as tooling and re-tooling, training and retraining, and skilling and re-skilling of employees/librarians to stay relevant in their multi-faceted job roles and sustain library and information service delivery in a changing work environment.

iii. **Adequate funding:** adequate funding and resources for sharing collections and services should be allocated to the library to improve the priceless and

invaluable services provided by librarians and support effective and efficient service delivery in the digital society.

iv. Sufficient power supply: there is a need for sufficient power supply, which can be provided by providing an alternate power supply.

v. Quality Information: Access to quality information is needed to overcome the issue of oversaturation in the delivery of effective library and information services.

vi. Job security: There is a need for librarians to be multi-skilled in this technology-driven era, be knowledgeable in specific subject areas, and be creative and innovative in the application and use of ICT, which have brought about more effective work processes and the provision of global access to information. Innovative technology has encouraged independent learning, thereby securing librarians' multi-dimensional job roles. All these developments have forced information professionals to upgrade their services to communicate effectively.

Conclusion

The role Librarians play as change agents for sustainable library and information service delivery in institutions of higher learning are fostering the creation of new communities academically, socially, economically, and politically for the growth of national development and the sustainability of their multi-dimensional job role. This thereby is enhancing life-long learning, as well as supporting, managing, and improving the intellectual capital of their institution in the digital society. Library and information science professionals have accepted the challenges of the digital age and thus changed their job roles to enhance their profession with their secret powers (flexible skills) for their survival and sustainability. Best practices for sustainability inlibrary and information service delivery include providing access to national and international networks, sharing knowledge, transferring knowledge, filtering information, and managing informationefficiently and effectively in a rightful manner.

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